

Local residents attempt to raise money to save Feed and Grain building

Trying to buy history

By Rachel Carter

Reporter-Herald Staff Writer

Several Loveland residents who want to save the Loveland Feed and Grain building from demolition are now trying to raise \$400,000 to buy the 1891 grain elevator.

Because, as they see it, if they can buy the building, they can buy some time.

The group wants to raise \$100,000 in donations by March 20 — the date of the next Loveland Historic Preservation Commission meeting and the date when the commission could decide the Feed and Grain's fate.

Residents Erin McLaughlin and Scott Waterhouse said the group plans to raise \$100,000 and use that money to ask for another \$300,000 from public and private organizations.

"We're hoping that if we can come to the commission meeting on the 20th with pledges in the \$100,000 range, that will be the catalyst to get the other money," Waterhouse said.

"I grant you that's wishful thinking, but it's doable."

Residents have been polling people and collecting petition signatures. They bought yard signs and printed pledge forms. They have created a Web site and plan to form a nonprofit group.

So far, McLaughlin said, the group has polled 167 people. About 157 wanted to restore the building; the top choice was to turn it into a farmers market, followed by a community center or art center.

So far, she said, the group has collected 154 signatures on a petition to save the building — and other petitions are circulating through the city.

"People only want to keep it if something is done with it," she said. "They don't want to save it and leave it standing there; our intent is to restore it and see it put to good use."

McLaughlin also is contacting local bigwigs who might have the money or inclination to help, such as McWhinney Enterprises, developer Don Marostica and local philanthropist Doug Erion.

The group still faces many "ifs": If residents raise the money and if they buy the property, the group would then have to find either money or a developer to renovate the building.

But owner Dean Anderson said it's just not realistic.

"The dream is there, but the practicality is not," said Anderson, who owns the building with his wife, Betty.

The Andersons, at developer Gary Hassenflu's request, submitted an application to the city in late January to tear down the building at 130 W. Third St.

Originally, Hassenflu, president of Garrison Cos. in Kansas City, Mo., hoped to transform the downtown landmark into apartments.

But Hassenflu said the dollars don't make sense, and he's out of options to redevelop the property. He wants to demolish the grain elevator and build from the ground up.

Anderson said he's not sure how long Hassenflu will wait for a decision. Hassenflu has an option to buy the 1-acre site; the contract to purchase the property expires June 1, Anderson said.

Anderson said even if the group raises the money to purchase the building, the numbers don't work. The Andersons' sale price is about \$450,000, and it could cost another \$3 million to renovate the building.

"It's not realistic; they're more emotionally involved than financially," he said of the group.

Anderson is emotionally involved, too: He was one of a group of local livestock ranchers that bought the property in 1968.

"People have asked, 'Don't you have sentiment for it?'" Anderson said. "Well, sure I have sentiment for it, but at what price?"

But those who want to save the 115-year-old building will give it their all until March 20 — knowing that the Feed and Grain is perhaps beyond salvation.

"The eventuality and the reality may be that even if we save it now — and that's a big 'if' — we may have to take it down later," Waterhouse said.

Locals want to collect \$100,000 in donations and pledges by March 20 to save the Loveland Feed and Grain building at 130 W. Third St. in downtown.

The group will poll people and collect petition signatures 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday at Thompson Park on the southeast corner of Fourth Street and Lincoln Avenue downtown.

Pledge forms to donate also are available at Anthology Book Store, Lux of Loveland and Sage Moon Galleries, and will be available at other downtown stores.

The group also has a Web site at www.lovelandfeedandgrain.org that features an online pledge form.

The Loveland Historic Preservation Commission could decide March 20 (although it has until May 20) whether to allow the owners, Dean and Betty Anderson, to tear down the Loveland Feed and Grain building at 130 W. Third St.

The Andersons received city historic designation for the Feed and Grain last year, which gives the Historic Preservation Commission some say in what happens to the building.

If the commission denies the Andersons' request to demolish the building, they can ask for an exemption based on "economic hardship" to allow demolition anyway.

If the commission denies both requests, the Andersons can appeal to the Loveland City Council.

With the Loveland Feed and Grain building in the background Thursday, Erin McLaughlin, left, and Sharon Anhorn show off the yard signs they hope will help save the 115-year-old grain elevator. They are forming a nonprofit group to try to save the Feed and Grain from demolition and are trying to raise \$400,000 to buy the property.